

Transcription: Edgar Goebel

Today is October 3rd, 2008. My name is Joe James, and I am here with Mr. Edgar Goebel. This interview is taking place in person at the Texas General Land Office in the legal conference room on the 9th floor. This interview is being conducted in support of the Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Thank you for being here. I've given you kind of our VOV interviewer's handout so you can also read along with the questions that we like to ask. As I mentioned to you, what you consider important about your experiences and what's important to this program.

Edgar Goebel: OK. If you'd like to know what my birthday is, that's 15 April 1920. I was born down in Yorktown, Texas. My parents' names were Edwin and Alma Goebel. I joined the Army Air Corps at Randolph Field in 1939. When I joined I was 19 years old. I had just finished high school, and that was before Pearl Harbor of course. So when Pearl Harbor hit, then I stayed on of course. At that point I ended up getting a retirement at the very end of my career. At the time of Pearl Harbor, I was at Randolph Field.

What were you doing between 1939 and '41?

Edgar Goebel: At that time, I was an aircraft mechanic at Randolph Field at basic pilot training. That's the intermediate, in other words there was primary, basic, and advanced training for the pilots. They had the basic, we had the BT-9s and later got the BT-13s for the pilot training.

What drew you to the Air Corps in 1939?

Edgar Goebel: I guess it was, well it could have been Navy, Air Corps, just as well, but I guess it was more so in as much as I wasn't all that far from Randolph Field perhaps that made me pick Randolph. I don't know just what my thoughts might have been on the Pearl Harbor portion of it. Of course we were all pretty well shook up right at the point of that. I do remember one thing in particular. We always had roll call right in front of the barracks every morning, and shortly after Pearl Harbor, some of our troops came out as officers instead of enlisted men. They has been in the Reserves and were called in, right on the spur of the moment so to speak. It was quite a surprise for a lot of us. We were never aware that they were Reserve officers. As far as the atom bomb, I was on Guam at the time that was dropped, and as a matter of fact there were the two bombs three days apart dropped on different locations of course.

That's very interesting because unlike most of our soldiers, your experience in the second World War, your combat experience didn't end, wasn't over when you heard about the dropping of the atomic bomb and that's something that I'd like to talk about.

Edgar Goebel: OK, that's right. That kind of was a prelude to signaling that the war was going to be over shortly, and soon it was over within all of our, the biggest share of our people that were draftees took advantage of getting out, and I can't blame 'em for that, of course. There were a handful of us that did remain on, that were career people like myself. In my particular instance, I was a flight engineer on the B-29, and in our organization, 16th Bomb Group of the 315th Bomb Wing, there were just the three of us that stayed on, and as a result we were in dire demand to be in the air about every third day because there wasn't anybody else. They had to have a flight engineer on each and every flight. As a result of the three of us staying on, I have to assume that it was in appreciation that they awarded the three of us a field commission, and a

year later, that commission has a flight officer, what we called the Blue Pickle, the equivalent to a warrant officer. A year later, they did away with the flight officer rank and we had a choice of reverting back to enlisted rank or continuing on with a commission. I did accept the commission as a second lieutenant at that point and from there on, it just was right on until I, down the line then I ended up with a captain, and am fully retired as a captain now, and had an interval in between where I had gotten out of the service in 1952 after I had come back from Guam in '48, spent four years at Station Ohio at Wright Patterson in the basic executive office as a nonappropriated funds officer, and went overseas for the second time to Korea, and spent a year there. I used to get to Japan as part of my job, there again as an unappropriated funds officer, but was picked up as being knowledgeable of buildings. I had built five houses while I was in Dayton, Ohio, and they were expanding the officer club, needed the building materials of which the only thing we had in Korea was rock and sand. So all of that building material had to be flown in from Japan, and as a result I made contact with that in Japan, and it was all flown in including rebar, lumber, cement, you name it. I was also at one place that had required 5,000 pounds of glass for an orphanage in Korea that was being sponsored by the military Catholics, and I ended up bringing that in on aircraft. Our aircraft were primarily designed, it was the goony bird, C-47. It could carry 5,000 pounds dead weight, and that was being used by the Air Force bases in Korea to bring in the liquor from Japan, from the liquor lockers there. We didn't stop with just the liquor. We brought in Kobe beef for the officer club mess, fresh vegetables, you could just about name it. We had an extra third charge at the mess that helped purchase this, but in addition to those third charge, the liquor that was being brought in for our officer club and the NCO club, too, that was being retailed out to any of the ground forces in Korea that would come to our base and purchase that with a very small markup, and that markup was just added onto the funds for our Kobe beef and the vegetables, so it was a win-win proposition for everybody. Like I say, I did get acquainted with Japan. Looked like it wasn't bad duty over there, so when my year was up in Korea, I volunteered for Japan, and wouldn't you know I got an assignment in the northern tip of Japan, 30 miles across the water from Russia, and we were never that friendly with Russia believe it or not, even after the Japanese war. So I made a trip up there, caught a hop up there and looked the place over and I was told that they were snowed in six months out of the year. At that point I took a volunteer __, and I took on off and at that time I had 14 years of active duty. I did stay in the Reserve at that point, and for the next three years, then got into the Ready Reserve and was getting weekend training at Bergstrom Air Force Base at Austin, Texas. After that, I applied and we were at a point where we were in a recession and things were rather tight, and I decided to go on back in and that was the main reason for getting in the Ready Reserve so as to have something that I could present on my letter of grade determination to return to the service. When I sent that in, the reply I got was you have been out for four years. The best we can do for you is one stripe, a 1st Class Airman. I showed it to my commander here at Bergstrom and his reply was goddam, I'd see Lyndon Johnson about this line of crap. Well I wasn't going to do that because once you go to your congressman, your career is pretty well shot in the military, but it made me think, now they had a currier plane from Bergstrom that would go to Langley, Virginia, right outside of Washington D.C., and as I remember it was once a week. So I put on my military uniform as a captain at this point which I was in the regular Reserve, and I took a trip up to the Pentagon to personnel. I hatched another letter identical to the first one and hand carried it to the personnel in the Pentagon, and the kid at the desk carried it into the back room and came back out and he had two stripes for me. Well I said I don't think I can make it on that. I've got a family and all. So I pick up my letter and slowly turned around and headed for the door. At that point the kid at the desk sounds off, he said wait a minute, wait a minute, let me take this back to somebody with more rank back there, which he did and came back out with three stripes. He says now that is it, that's the best we can do for you. Well, I went from one stripe to three and I figured well, that wasn't all that bad. I

had six stripes when I received my field commission and I could very well get those back along the line. Well, when I did get back into the service at that point, I was picked up for undercover work. They would issue us, we would carry one uniform and work in civilian clothes, and the way we had discovered all this was there was one of the instructors had just come back from overseas duty and he was bubbling all over, couldn't tell us enough about what a wonderful deal he had. Well, he told us more than he should have I suppose because what I heard didn't appeal to me one bit, and became the dumbest one in the class. While I was in that class, they had already promised me the fourth stripe if I'd have made it, but I couldn't see myself ending up as a POW knowing how POWs had been treated in the past, and I cut out of that one by the skin of my teeth. They offered me three locations where I could be transferred to, and two of them were in California. I had never been in California, so I arbitrarily picked one of them not knowing what I was getting into, and it was in the San Joaquin Valley in the central portion of California, an ideal location. At Sac Base we had B-52s and KC-135 tankers, and as you well know, whatever the MOS that they need in the military, that is what you will become, and I suddenly became a clerk at that point. Yeah, a clerk. Well, that lasted for several months until I finally got myself squirmed out of that one again. Here I had spent all of my 14 years prior in the military on the flight line as an aircraft mechanic and then during the war as a flight engineer on the B-29, and I kind of felt like I was shorting the service by not going on in that direction. Well I went aboard and first thing they asked me was how in the world did you ever get sidetracked like this? I says gosh, I wish I would know. Anyway they got me back on the flight line and it was go, go from then on. I also had a civilian aircraft mechanic's license, a federal license, that I had acquired at Wright Patterson where there it was primarily all civilian employees, and I'm backing up here a little at this point. But they had a school where these civilians could attend and get a civilian mechanic's license, federal license, and they had a larger quota that they were able to fill and asked me if I would be interested and I said you can bet on it. So that's how I got my federal license for aircraft. Anyway, back on the flight line, we're back at Sac at this point now, I was located at Capital Air Force Base for four years and at that point they came up with a volunteer assignment to Washington, D.C., a top secret job that they wouldn't tell us what it was. Well, I'd never been in Washington D.C. for duty, so I took a chance on that one and that turned out to be the best assignment I ever had. I spent four years there. That assignment, I can tell what it is now, but at that time it was top secret. It was an airborne command post. There was a missile coming in from Russia. We had V aircraft had served the purpose of getting our top brass out of the Pentagon into the air so that when that missile would strike Washington D.C. and our base which was Andrews Air Force Base, that they could continue on with business. That aircraft from the time we would get an alert signal, we would have that airplane cranked up and on the runway with a ladder truck waiting for the people from the Pentagon to get out there and board that airplane, and that airplane would be rolling in 11 minutes from the time of the signal. So of course we all know that never materialized to where we had to use that. But nevertheless, our tour there now was for four years, and when that time was up, we had to rotate out and get to another location. Fortunately right at that time, the Apollo project was starting up and there was a liaison office at Andrews where we were located and one of our troops made contact there and as a result all of the rest of us did the same thing. We ended up down at Cape Canaveral at Satellite Beach where our base was. We took over a location there where the Navy had sense enough to get out where the corrosion was eating up their aircraft, but anyway it was just a few miles from Cape Canaveral and we had the KC-135s that used the tankers that were converted, and every time a missile was fired from Cape Canaveral, there would be six of these aircraft run around the earth, that equaled a distance so there was always contact with the missile at all times. You might remember that the missile would make a couple of rounds around the earth before they would slingshot off into space, and that's where these six aircraft came into play. There was also a photo plane that would fly a spiral around the takeoff of the missile, and I was

fortunate enough to ride on one of these takeoffs of the missile. It was quite interesting. The glow of the blastoff flame of each missile, it's just something I cannot even describe. It was just out of this world. It was so unreal. My living quarters were on base, 15 miles from Cape Canaveral, and we could step out when they would blast off one of these missiles, and it was just like being up close even 15 miles away. It was just unbelievable. So that's where I had ended up, and with 24-1/2 years of military service before I retired. I always get that half year in there because the retirement pays for a full year. So I retired as a master sergeant which I had hoped to get back and I did, and then at my 30th year total of active duty plus retirement of the other five years, I was advanced to my highest grade held which was a captain C, and as such I have been drawing out retirement pay now ever since. That was from 1968 until now, which is about right at 40 years. It's been a pleasure all the way through on this. I have a nine-page document here that I have recorded of my tour on Guam where I spent the three years before the end of the war with Japan, and then stayed on after the surrender. My wife spent two years there with me, and was a very interesting and pleasure to be there. I got seven trips to Hawaii R&R's and just a few days at different times. I also got one trip all the way back to Peyote, Texas while I was there, and my wife was left behind there for several days. When I got to Peyote, they gave us three days to get back to the west coast and get on a match plane and go back out to Guam. Well, my folks and my in-laws all live south of Peyote, southeast really, and everybody else was getting loaded on the train while the liaison officer at Peyote, I made a beeline to be right at the front of that line, got on the train and got off the train again at the other end of that car and got right back over in the depot. So when the train pulled out I was out on the road and I headed south. Well I got back over to the west coast in time to get that match plane, and got on back out to Guam, and the weather on Guam was ideal. I had okra growing there in my yard the full time that I was there. Now to give you an idea what the area was like, a bank at Guam down at the island at Iguana was a Quonset hut. That gives you an idea of what the area was like. The depending housing was Quonset huts that the covering on the Quonset hut was skid off, and they were turned into bungalows. We had no ceilings in these quarters. Of course that wasn't any reason to stop me from getting ceilings in mine as long as there was plywood available on the base. There again, families that had children were authorized a hot water heater for their showers. Well, there was just the two of us, my wife and myself, so we did not have a hot water heater issued to us as such. That didn't stop us from having hot water however. I cut a 50-gallon drum in half, set it up in the top of the shower and stuck a hot plate under it. We did have electric. So it's a make-do situation in a lot of cases. But things worked out quite well. I also got an R&R into Japan at one point, and if I recall it was for three days. I don't remember exactly what it was that our organization had been awarded this R&R, but anyway they had to fulfill it with a couple of people and I just happened to be one that was selected for no good reason. So it was a real nice three days there. Coming back from Guam, my wife had gotten over there on a flight when she came overseas, but when we returned, the two of us returned on a ship and shortly before we returned, the PX was receiving new automobiles. They were getting in Pontiacs, Fords, and Mercury's, and the difference in price between a Mercury and a Ford was \$100. So you know I picked out a Mercury for the little difference. And this was a month before I was scheduled to return and I never even licensed that automobile. I just parked it in the backyard and took it back down to the port a month later and I had a brand new automobile when I arrived at San Francisco at the port there. They did not have an assignment for me when we arrived there, and they told us just go on home and we'll send you orders whenever we do get an assignment for you. I said no, no, no, I'll just wait here for my assignment, and when I was waiting, we toured San Francisco every day there for a full week. Every morning I would check in and no assignment, well, we would just go visiting some more. Well like I mentioned, I did not license this vehicle, had not licensed it, and I didn't license it when I got to San Francisco. I drove across country all the way to Texas and from there to, or I was going to drive it on to Ohio,

my new station at Staten, Ohio. Well I made it all the way down to central Texas, and my in-laws there scared me up that the local law was going to nail me for sure, and I did get a Texas license at that point. Then like I say, my assignment then was at Wright Patterson, and to start with I was in the transit maintenance hangar, two of us officers and all the rest were civilian employees. And from there I was moved up to the executive office and the officer in charge believe it or not was a copilot of the raid on Tokyo, the initial raid with the B-25s. The Doolittle Raid, yes. Colonel Richard E. Cole.

Really?

Edgar Goebel: Yes indeed. And as far as I know, he was still alive here a year ago when I saw him at San Marcos when they had that recreation of the Tokyo raid. However, he was not able to speak. Everything I'd ask him to verify, he would merely nod his head. So I don't know if he's still alive at this point or not, and that was in 2007 of course.

You said in '41 you were at Randolph.

Edgar Goebel: Yeah, I was, that's when I got in right in '39. Yes, I was there whenever the Pearl Harbor attack, yes.

Between Pearl Harbor and your assignment to the 315th, did you continue working as an aircraft mechanic at Randolph?

Edgar Goebel: Yes, OK, back that up a bit. Six months after I had signed up at Randolph initially, they picked me up for a machinist school in Illinois, and the reason for that was even though I was on the flight line, the reason for that was that I had a high proficiency score in mathematics. That fell right in line with a machinist's career. I finished that school. There were 13 of us in that class, where everybody else was assigned to KP there and all the other type of the schools had had that class that they had there, the machinists were exempt. Believe it or not, my whole career in the military, I never spent one day as a KP. At Randolph we had Mexican wetback KP's that lived in our basement and ate our rations, and we paid if I remember it a dollar a month. Of course my pay at that time was only \$21 a month of course, so that's \$1, kind of hard to come by and turn loose of. But anyway there was no KP for me there, no KP when I was in the machinist school, and I had gotten a few stripes and I was exempt at that point. Then when I went into flight engineer school, there again the flight engineers were exempt. Consequently I never spent a day in all of my career as a KP. Very unusual, but it still happened.

You were a flight engineer on a B-29. At the time, that was the most complex airplane.

Edgar Goebel: Yes it was. Up until that time, there had been flight engineers. Really in effect all they were were coffee servers, but the B-29 came along and they took all of the engine controls and instruments away from the pilot and gave them full control of the flight controls, and the only thing that he had was a throttle and feather buttons. That was it. The flight engineer, his primary job was to monitor the fuel consumption, but he had all of the other engine instruments. He had his instrument panel in front of him, he had his console in front of him with the duplicate throttles which the pilot had also. The flight engineer had the fuel mixture control for each engine, he had the control switch – the B-29 was electronic controlled, had no hydraulic controls whatsoever – and everything was electronic. The engineer had all of these switches for controlling the cull flap controls for cooling the engines, also the engine oil cooler control, the air cooler for the carburetor which controlled the temperature of the air going into the carburetor,

and the air for the carburetors was derived from two turbos on each engine. There were a total of 8 turbos. The air conditioning and pressurization which the B-29 had came from number three engine from one of the two turbos. On our particular aircraft, our number three engine burned more fuel than the other three, and the only thing I can account for that is perhaps the only reason was we were robbing that engine of some of that pressurization for the carburetor and putting it into the cabin. At any rate, as a result of that using more fuel on one of our missions when we returned, that engine went dry on us just before we landed, and this was just before we came in for the landing, and it put me on a spot there – do I notify the pilot that I have a dead engine here? Or do I keep quiet and not startle him? Anyway, I kept quiet, and after we landed, it would drive over and glide coming in for the landing. When we landed, the airplane had leveled out at that point and it picked up enough residue of fuel that was left in the tank to where it went back to running. Finally the propeller had been windmilling all this time now, and the pilot was never aware that that engine was dead. I told him about it afterwards and he had always respected my decisions on anything that ever came along at my end of the job, and he also bought this one. So I'd like to make mention of checklists in training. Everybody used a checklist not only in training but anytime you get into the aircraft, you use a checklist. While we were in training, the copilot reads off the checklist for the pilot. He had overlooked one item on that checklist and that was for the wing flaps to be put at halfway down for takeoff. We went down that runway and I felt that nose coming up higher and higher and I knew something was wrong but I didn't know what. The airplane did break clear of the runway, and what the pilot does at that point on a takeoff, he will always hit the brakes and stop those wheels from turning. That's what he did again on this one, but he had stalled his airplane off, he did not have flying – enough air speed to keep it going, and it just stalled right back down, and when it hit the runway, it blew out two tires. But when it blew those tires, it also bounced it hard enough to where it did get enough forward speed at that point to where it did get it off into the air, and he made a go-around, brought it back in, and set it down with two flat tires. Good pilot.

I noticed your aircraft commander was more experienced than most bomber pilots.

Edgar Goebel: I don't know just what his total experience was.

I actually found a story. Your aircraft commander was from Montana, Sam.

Edgar Goebel: Helena, Montana. He did not want to be named Helena. I'm sorry. It had to be, well we call it Hel-E-na here, of course, for our town in Texas. Flat wouldn't hear of it. It had to be HEL-e-na.

He gave a story to the University of Montana about having, he had trained bomber pilots prior to being assigned to the B-29 crew, and I'll show you this in a moment. But his commanding officer had said that he couldn't transfer out to a combat unit until he trained 400 pilots without incident. When he accomplished that, he went back to his commanding officer, and his commanding officer wanted to talk him out of it, but he wouldn't have it. So it seems like you were very fortunate to have a pilot with that much experience.

Edgar Goebel: Yes. Very good, I was not aware of that, and the reason perhaps was that our crew under Captain Roberts, he was captain at this point, was that he did not divulge anything about himself, and it was military all the way. We were addressed by our rank and we were not to fraternize with any enlisted people who we traveled with of course at that point. We were not to fraternize with any of the officers, and even though our bombardier was a flight officer, he and I would go pheasant hunting there in Nebraska, and I stuck my foot in my mouth at one point

when I didn't refer to him as Mr., but anyway, I have to give Captain Roberts credit. He was the man that helped get me a commission, and as a matter of fact, three of us flight engineers. But I could never quite understand why he didn't allow his copilot to get the experience that he should have let him have. Let's assume that Captain Roberts could've gotten killed over the target, and our copilot might have been in good shape. We would have been in kind of a bind for our copilot to carry through for us. By the same token, we have this information on our navigator here, and I made it a point to clue him in in case I could've been knocked out, and he would have survived, as to what he would need to do at my station, and things worked out quite well for the force, and I would kind of play along with some of his navigation. Now what we did in training, we had our, they had gunners and we had guns at training, but then when we got our aircraft, it was stripped, except for the tail gun. Eventually the one that we took overseas, and by the way, we were assigned to a certain aircraft that we stayed with through the war, and the only gun we had on our craft was a tail gun, 20 millimeter. In our training, like I say, we did have guns with live ammunition, and so we had dropped nobi bombs and the bombardier had failed to close the Bombay doors. After that, one of the gunners turned loose with his guns and we ended up with holes in the Bombay doors. Yeah. There, too, on our first mission, after the bombardier had dropped his bombs, he was going to see, watch those bombs going down to the target, and had his head up against the front window of the aircraft, and Captain Roberts was pretty well perturbed at that point. He unlatched his safety belt and he gave that bombardier a boot that he never forgot.

Well they were in pretty close proximity up there in the front.

Edgar Goebel: Oh yes. The pilot and copilot both had I guess you call it bulletproof windshields inside of the cabin. It wasn't a windshield as such, it was a bulletproof glass, and it was about I would say an inch and a half, an inch and three-quarter thick. After the war, we removed those. Of course there was no need for them anymore. And I took and fired a 45 slug into one of them to see how far it would go through, and it only went about halfway. All of the crew members carried 45's by the way, and I couldn't hit the side of a barn with mine, but there again, Captain Roberts could hit a bull's eye just coming and going. He was good with it, he really was. I always figured if we ever went down, I was going to be sure to stay close to Captain Roberts. And if we'd have gone down and got scattered which we would have, in a parachute, we were to reassemble on the highest hill in the area. So everybody knew pretty well where they would reassemble. Now the other thing that we had was as you might recall, a lot of our POWs were able to write letters at home. Well in our case, if this were to happen to any one of us on a crew, there was one member on each and every crew, never the same position, and the reason I know this is because I happened to be that one member that was selected to get out information on the letter if we were allowed as a POW to write a letter home. That letter would have been intercepted, and with the code that they had taught us, we could get out information back to our military, and I never knew who the others were, for the simple reason that we could never fink on each other if this came about.

When you were assigned to the B-29 crews, were there any veterans from Europe, B-17 or B-24 crews?

Edgar Goebel: I was never in Europe. I volunteered for it but I never got it, and I spent the first five years in the training commands where we were training pilots at Randolph. Then I went to San Angelo where we were training bombardiers, and from there to Big Spring, and that's where I was, which was also bombardier training, and from there I was picked up then for the flight engineer job.

Had anybody in the 315th been in Europe?

Edgar Goebel: I have no idea.

I was just trying to get a sense of the contrast between flying the B-29 over Japan and -

Edgar Goebel: No, I never had any training whatsoever on like you're thinking of perhaps the B-17, or even the B-24. Oh yeah, I didn't mention that the first place they sent us was to Seattle to the Boeing factory. I spent three months there in their factory school, and it was probably one of the best schools I ever attended. It was very good. Then from there I went to Denver in-air training as a flight engineer. They put us in a B-24 in the back end and would call back the engine instrument readings, and we would sit there with our computers and figure out the fuel consumption and all of that good stuff. While I was there, I got to see Mt. Rushmore. So I got to see that from the air two different times.

That's cool.

Edgar Goebel: There, by the way, I saw it later from the ground and it's an entirely different view. When you're in the air you look down and see these stone pinnacles sticking up in between and up beyond the spruce trees, and you say God help us if we ever had to land in something like this, crash land it, you just wouldn't stand a chance. But it's entirely a different view from the air on any sightseeing trip and I got a world of that, of course, even after I was on Guam. We even saw what the inside of Mt. Fuji looked like, but never again. Those warm terminals coming up from that shook our airplane. We were looking out the side windows and when those terminals hit it, it knocked every one of us onto the floor.

Did it seem odd to you to go later in your career to visit or even be stationed in Japan?

Edgar Goebel: Well, I was stationed in Korea of course, and I got over to Japan quite a bit on these runs, and that kind of encouraged me to volunteer for it. Of course as it was, it was everything I guessed, it couldn't have been any worse. That would've been a three-year tour up there in that northern portion. That just didn't appeal to me at all.

You played a part in a significant historical event. You flew the last bombing mission of the second World War.

Edgar Goebel: Oh yeah, OK, that was a run of 16 hours and 20 minutes.

And also the longest bombing mission.

Edgar Goebel: It was also the longest, yes. It sure was. We had to carry, of course every mission we made they gave us just enough fuel to get there and get back on the shorter runs, which the shorter ones were about 12 hours, they could load more bombs and give us less fuel of course. I don't mind telling you, I did a little napping there on that one coming back. By the way, talk about that sort of thing, we would run our engines at the slower, or air speed I should say, well the engine of course – our air speed was the slowest we could make it to conserve fuel, and on our last run on the last mission, of course we needed more fuel than on the other runs, and consequently we had less bombs. All of our bombs by the way were 500-pounders, general purpose bombs. Our group, our organization never did have any of the incendiary bombs like

they used on the cities. Our altitude was at 30,000 feet also, and whereas a lot of the others were down as low as 10,000 feet. The Japanese fighters weren't aware that we had stripped aircraft and they would get in close, but they would fly along and get our altitude and the air speed and radio that back down to the radar guns. On the radar guns, we also had shafe, which is a tin foil and it was in the configuration of a large typewriter ribbon, and if a searchlight did lock onto us, and those were radar, if they did lock onto us we'd start throwing out that shafe out through the camera hatch, and as soon as that would hit the airstream, it would just tear apart and have a big glitter of silver, and the radar gun would lock onto that and we'd be gone. The other thing they did for us, they painted the airplane black underneath and also black under the wings to deflect a lot of this radar.

And your group concentrated specifically on petroleum facilities.

Edgar Goebel: Yes, it was all petroleum industry, either tanks or refineries, one or the other. The last mission, that was the last petroleum that they had left the way we understood it.

I'm sorry if I skip around a little bit, you spoke about your assignment at Andrews AFB, and I was wondering if that was during the Cuban missile crisis.

Edgar Goebel: Yes, it definitely was.

That had to be a nerve-wracking time.

Edgar Goebel: Yes, there by the way, while I was at Andrews, believe it or not, this is Colonel Roberts at this point, he was coming through delivering an aircraft down to the Florida area, and he made it a point to look me up at Andrews, yes he sure did.

Outstanding.

Edgar Goebel: Yes he sure did, and there at Andrews also La May had his own aircraft of course, and it was in the same hangar that we were located. The adjoining hangar was where the presidential aircraft was hangared.

Not a bad assignment.

Edgar Goebel: Every time the president would go out, of course there would be a big hullabaloo with him boarding and getting and returning and all of that. So I got to see some of that.

Did you ever have a close encounter with Japanese POWs?

Edgar Goebel: I'm glad you mentioned that. I'd have plum forgot about that. Yes, very much so. We had not POWs but Jap personnel that were on Guam initially that hid out in the jungle after we took over, and they were still there even when I left, yes. They could survive because there was enough to eat out there in that jungle, and they never bothered anybody. Now what happened there when the war was over with, Life magazine had an article talking about the surrender and all of that. There was one of those or maybe more of those that ended up in a dump, and holdouts became aware that the war was over by that Life magazine, yeah. Isn't that something. So the Jap POWs that we had on Guam, they were used to build the dependent housing. Now I didn't mention, but the Jap military and civilians, too, I'm sure, they recognized

authority. That's why MacArthur had no problem when he was assigned to walk in onto Japan. He became their god at that point, and these POWs that we had on Guam during this housing construction, we only had one officer in charge of them. No guards, no nothing. Whoever is in charge, that is the person that they will own up to, yes very much so. It's really something.

You mentioned seeing the president with the presidential aircraft. Were there any other famous personalities that you encountered during your service?

Edgar Goebel: Well the only thing, one was LeMay of course, and that was his personnel that took care of his one airplane. They were all superior in rating. Consequently our people were also in that same pool, but they were superior technically to us. At that point our supervisors wised up and we all became superior, too, yeah, gave them a little bit of competition there, darn right.

Did you see particular moments of bravery or cowardice?

Edgar Goebel: No, can't say that I did. One item there, during when we were flying missions, of course they'd line up our aircraft one behind the other on the runway for takeoff, and we had just had a modification on the propeller controls. The first three aircraft that took off on this bomb run, and there by the way our runways were 500 foot above the ocean across a peninsula. That's where our bases, north field and northwest field were located. What they would do, the airplanes were loaded to the limit on weight, of course, they'd get off to the end of the runway and stall it off at that point and then ease it down to the water to pick up speed, and what happened in this particular case, the first three aircraft after this propeller modification, which turned out to be a dud and I don't know exactly what the problem really was, but they lost power, and went right into the ocean when they went down to pick up that speed. They just kept right on going and a bigger share of those three crews were killed on that. After those three, the tower was able to stop the rest of us. Consequently I was further back in that line and that's why I'm still here. So it's been the case there all along where a little fella ridin' on my shoulder is always protectin' me I suppose, there too. Right after the war was over with, we went to flying POW supplies up to Manchuria where we had POWs of our people that the Japs had up there in the camps. There, the war was over with now, so we had people that wanted to go sightseeing. The supplies that we were carrying were in 50-gallon drums mounted on plywood platforms and placed in the bombays and hooked to the salvag switch with cargo chutes so that they could be dropped at the POW site. Now when we made that first run, two hours out of Guam, we had number two engine propeller that went wild, went out of control, and so it turned out, back that up a bit – the propellers were controlled by engine oil, and for the speed of the propeller as well as to feather the propeller in case you wanted to shut the engine down. Well in this particular case, somebody when they had changed the engine oil, they had failed to tighten the drain plug and it came loose in flight and after two hours, we had lost all the oil on that engine and we lost control of the propeller, and it went into a high rate of speed like a gyro, extremely high, and there was no way that I could control it, the pilot couldn't control it, not with his feathering button either, so we were just stuck with that propeller up there just like a gyro. I set all the three other engines up to burn as much fuel as possible to get rid of that extra weight because we were going back to return to base. So what we did then, the pilot then, Captain Roberts, he said everybody back to the back, sightsee or something, back to the tail end of the airplane, and we had the two scanners in the back that were at the back hatch to bail out, because we had to if they had to, kept the front to pilot, copilot, radio man, and a flight engineer, and their respective positions. The radio man kept sending out distress signals and then after 15 minutes of this propeller windmilling out there, the nose cone of that engine was burning with no oil in that

engine, and the planetary gearing, reduction gearing in that which was a three to one by the way, engine turned over three times for every one turn of the propeller, that planetary gearing in that nose cone was starting to burn holes in the nose cone and it was flipping out fire out of the nose cone after 15 minutes of this out of control. At that point, well even before then, I had set the other engines up to run rich, and I wasn't much concerned about watching them anymore, but I was watching that number 2 engine through my up spatial window, and the propeller shaft was starting to turn cherry red and it started pulling itself out of the nose cone, and when it did that, that was exactly 20 minutes – I had timed it – when it started to pull itself out of the propeller pulling itself with a thread, cherry red shaft out of the nose cone, I hollered at the pilot, it's coming off now! And at that point he jams his controls all the way forward and threw the airplane into a steep dive. The propeller stayed spinning out there, in the configuration of a gyro, the airplane dived down below it and then he pulled it back out into a glide, and the propeller went right over the top of our wing, put a little dent in the colling, and that was the only damage to the airplane besides the engine, of course, was a total loss. Yes. Now, when he put it into that steep dive, those sightseers in the back, they had no idea what was happening. Now mind you, now take this airplane, you have the wing, that's a pivot point, right? OK, throw the nose of the airplane down, what happens to the tail?

It goes up.

Edgar Goebel: It goes up. Now these guys in the back end were sitting on the floorboard. They are thrown up against the ceiling in that airplane, and they sure thought it was time to get out. If it hadn't been for two scatters in the back there, they would have probably gone out of it. Anyway, after he leveled it out and came on back then and made a landing without any problem of course. One thing that is really brought out, the second atomic bomb that was dropped, the first one was on Hiroshima of course, second one on Nagasaki three days later, they had flown around, that was their primary target by the way. They had been flying around, and the first target was socked in, and they couldn't make a drop on that. The second target, same thing. Nagasaki was partially socked in. Now they had wasted most of their fuel flying around trying to find a place to drop, and after they had dropped that atomic bomb, they figured they couldn't make it back to Saipan and they headed over towards Okinawa, and two of their engines went dry before they landed, yes. They were really cutting it close.

I don't think they wanted to land with that big bomb.

Edgar Goebel: Oh, I'm telling you. There again, the ship that delivered those atomic bombs, after they delivered them, they were heading for the Philippines from there, and halfway there they were intercepted by a Japanese submarine and were hit with a couple of, I forget the name of the torpedoes, but it was the biggest that the Japanese had, and that ship went down in short order there. The biggest share of those sailors either drowned in the ocean or were killed by the sharks. The information I read was that there was a tremendous amount of sharks where the ship went down. So that's one of the stories that hadn't gotten out very much, but that was quite interesting for me.

Is there anything you would tell the current group of soldiers serving now, what would it be?

Edgar Goebel: Well of course we have an entirely different situation at this time. The other one, the second war, we were fighting really for our survival, where now, it's not exactly the same situation, but nevertheless it's still taking care of our own country in a roundabout way. Even though the situation is different at this point, I have to admire our troops for what they are

doing. I think it's wonderful the way they are staying right with it and whereas take Vietnam for instance, our troops were so looked down on towards the end that it was a dirty shame the way they were treated when they returned from Vietnam, pitiful. I never got to Vietnam. In fact I was with the Apollo project. I spent two years there and then I took retirement at that point. Vietnam was still on at that time. Yeah, I definitely have to admire the troops that we have now. They are wonderful people.

Is there anything you'd like to add today before we wrap up?

Edgar Goebel: No doubt I've overlooked something.

If anything occurs to you, just give us a call. I'd be happy to sit down with you again.

Edgar Goebel: OK. Talking about the checklists. Of course I had several trips to Hawaii after the war, and once they started bringing in replacements, it all ended up to be as many flights as I had been, but anyway, we had one flight to Hawaii for Christmas supplies, and on their way back like all of us, we'd always land at Quadulan and refuel. On their takeoff there, now that Quadulan, the runway is level with the ocean, and I had mentioned earlier about checklists. An item is overlooked, you're in trouble, and especially the flaps. There's no way that we will ever know for sure, but I can't help but believe that this particular item had been overlooked on the takeoff at Quadulan, and that airplane took off and at the end of the runway it went into the ocean, and everybody on it got killed. There's no way of ever knowing exactly what caused it, but in my own mind and knowing what will happen if that one item is overlooked, and these people had spent several days in Hawaii, and no doubt they were fatigued because I was, I know what it was like to have spent several days over there. Anyway, that was one of the things.

And it seems like the pictures I've seen of B-29's, especially if they're coming in for a landing, the flaps are extraordinary on that airplane.

Edgar Goebel: Well, just bigger of course than a smaller aircraft would, yes of course. But they still come down to half point pretty much so like most aircraft. No doubt that some of them are at a different angle, but somewhere at that general location, yeah. OK, another thing, this happened, and this was one of my faults – the entrance lighter, because in the nose gear of the B-29, and I had entered at the hatch that is right next to the flight engineer, and it is the flight engineer's job to pull that ladder in after everybody has boarded. For some reason or another, I didn't pull that ladder in. I dropped the hatch, and when we took off, that nose gear came up, those front wheels on the nose gear hit that ladder and knocked it out of the hatch for the nose gear, and it fell clear. It could've come right on up through that hatch, with that wheel knocking it right on up into the cabin, and no telling what would've happened at that point.

Might not have pressurized too well.

Edgar Goebel: Of course you're not pressurized at ground level. Pressurization comes in at 8,000 feet. Another item that happened was before takeoff, the flight engineer would always check each and every engine and on our engines we had carburetors, a lot of engines. Later, the aircraft had fuel injection. Well, those carburetors for some reason or another, they would have a tendency to build up a seepage, and what that flight engineer would do is put somebody in his position in the cabin and the flight engineer would eyeball the carburetor and anything else within the engine cell to see if there was anything out of place, and there of course you have to open a colling on that cell to look into there. Well, I failed to button that colling up all the way, and it was just hanging there, in place, but it didn't appear like anything out of place if you were looking at it from the ground. After we got in the air, of course the air stream caught it and it just whipped it off to the side. It was just hanging there in the air stream. So that's strictly human errors and it was my fault, just like the gunner, the bombardier failing to close the Bombay doors, yeah. OK. Oh yeah, imagine Life magazine that brought to the attention of the holdouts on Guam, Japanese holdouts, there again, Life magazine came into play when I was in Korea. The word got out that the GI's in Japan were taking advantage of the public baths and spas and the cabarets, and of course some of these wives and girlfriends get walked out of shape back in the States. Well, Life magazine came to the rescue. They sent a man over with a camera and all, and he had a beautiful article in Life magazine. This woman in the cabaret in a sun suit with a bath towel hanging over her forearm, yeah. He did a beautiful job.

Propaganda for the home front.

Edgar Goebel: Here's some items that might be of interest, this before the World War II, like I had gotten in a couple of years before that. It might be interesting that a private's pay was \$21 a month, and they would take out for laundry and dry cleaning, and also 50 cents for the old soldier's home, and we got paid in cash. Of course this you all know, it's been by check for quite some years now, and where I was located at Randolph, we also, a third member was a dollar for our KP's, with KP's. And the other thing, I'm talking about \$21 a month, the pay for a staff sergeant was \$72, that is four stripes of course. Five stripes tech sergeant, and that was \$84. Now, they also had an arrangement, this was before Pearl Harbor now, we could take an exam for aircraft maintenance that was called AM-1 and AM-2. AM-1 paid let's say even a one striper the same pay as a tech sergeant, which was \$84 in place of his \$21 or a two striper which was somewhere around \$40 or whatever, \$36 for a one striper by the way. Private's pay with no stripe was \$21. There was also the lower AM rating which was the equivalent of a staff sergeant pay which was \$72. Quite a jump there where you could with very few stripes draw a very good pay. Now once a staff sergeant could once he got to that point with the four stripes, he was eligible to draw quarters and ration if he was married. If he wasn't married, he couldn't draw that of course. And when he got to that point, then he could not draw any one of these AM ratings. So you kind of had to play it cool. Of course as soon as I got that fourth stripe, I got married.

Did you meet your wife when you were at Randolph?

Edgar Goebel: While I was at Randolph – I didn't meet her there, no. I met her, I'd go home on weekends down in Yorktown, Texas, about 90 miles south of Randolph, and met her there at a country dance and she gave me the google eyes and man, I'm telling you that's what did it. A year later I got married. Now the other thing that they had for us, they had chits that you could draw before your next pay day. In other words, advance credit, and that would be for purchases at the canteen or at the PX, and you could also draw advance show tickets which were 15 cents at

that time. What I would do, I would buy these show tickets for 10 cents and same way with the, oh they were called Jawbone by the way, canteen tickets, I never spent any cash at the canteen. I'd buy them from somebody else. They were glad to draw them against the next month's pay and I'd get them for several cents less and I'd get a bargain that way. The other thing, too, was that when I had gone in, I had \$10 in my pocket when I went to Randolph to join. I also had \$30 in my bank account. Now the gamblers did quite well. This is professional gamblers that were in the service, and of course you had all of the suckers that thought they were gamblers. But they would go over their month's pay the same day they'd get paid, and then they'd be flat broke the rest of the month. And they would come to somebody that would lend them money at 25 cents on the dollar for one month. 300 percent. Yeah, you bet. Well, I turned loose of what cash I had pretty fast and I cashed in on this deal, and you start figuring what this amounts to, I'm telling you, it's big money. It really is. Being they would get paid cash at the end of the month, you'd be right there at that cash table when that guy came through that owed you and get paid back, and then a few days later after he spent all of his money again, he'd be right back borrowing again. That's the way it was. The reason I got into the service was that I grew up on a farm, and farm labor at that time during the Depression was a dollar a day, and if I was riding a herd for my uncle when he would be moving cattle, I would make two dollars – one dollar for me and one dollar for my horse. I never did learn much Japanese. About the only thing I ever learned there was just a few words, and one of those was hello-hello, which is mushy-mushy, and they used that on the telephone – mushy-mushy ano-nay. That translates out hello-hello, now hear this. And good night is sayonara, unless you want to really be polite like God be with you until we meet again, and that is o-yo-so-meen-a-si-ya. And if you really want to give somebody a real, blow a little smoke up their rear so to speak, you want to tell them they are number one person, that is ichi-ban, number one. The one other word was tok-san. Guys would describe some of the women as having good-sized breasts and they would say tok-san chi-chi's. Well tok-san does not mean big, it means many. So that didn't fit quite right. Yeah. That came to light when we had a translator that was trying to teach us Japanese!

It goes under human error.

Edgar Goebel: The other thing, when I was going to Japan from Korea on these buying trips, they had sent me on these trips, by the way, after they had found out that I had done building on the sideline that they wanted to expand the officer club. Like I say, there was no material in Korea to build with other than sand and gravel. So everything had to be flown in, so it ended up they discovered that I knew materials and so I was put on that end of it besides making these runs for picking up the liquor and staying overnight, making the cabarets of course. Of course I always had to get cleaned up in those spas of course. Now when I'd go into these stores, and this wasn't just small purchases as a rule, it was might into a little bit of money, and the store clerks would always treat me to their tea and rice cookies in the bars in the store, and there's a custom to trade a token gift with whomever you deal with, even if they're just friends or whatever. Well you cannot overdo the bowing. You always bow. On the 5,000 pounds of glass, that particular shop had only one person that could speak English and that was a little high school girl, and believe it or not, she was getting paid 50 cents a day. I invited her out for dinner on the second haul I made on that glass, and when she met me that evening out on the street, I heard this klop-klop-klop, these wooden shoes, and it turned out it was this little girl. She was wearing her sister's shoes and her sister's kimono. Anyway, surprises, surprises. They also had taxi dances. Some of that was going on here also. The women would make themselves available at a dance and you would buy a ticket from them for whatever, I forget exactly what the price was on those tickets now, but anyway, they had these taxi dances over there, too, and these women would be dressed up fit to be killed, evening gowns and all. Now those women, they didn't leave the

dance, where a lot of these other cabarets, it was wide open there. You could spend the night if you saw fit. I can't give you all of this. We'll have to shut down. Oh yeah, while I was on Guam, after the war the military went to selling the surplus Jeeps. You might know what I did. I went into the Jeep business. You bet. And there again, a bottle of whiskey would buy a paint job, a bottle of whiskey would buy a sport-o-top. Fancy looking Jeeps, you darn right. And they would sell you a spare Jeep, for an extra \$50. A primary Jeep was \$250. But shoot, after you get it dressed up like this, they'd go for \$1,000. That was going rate. I'd get one after another, darn right. And they also sold surplus to the Chinese. They had a motor pool where they stored these Jeeps, and when they saw what the American military was doing for us individuals, they just opened, they sold their surplus Jeeps that they had on lease back to us again. We had Jeeps sticking out our ears.

That would probably be nice to have now.

Edgar Goebel: I didn't spend any time in the club. I was busy selling, plugging up these holes so I could take all this garbage off these things. Then of course I was doing moonlighting at Dayton, Ohio, building these houses, and during that time while I was building the first two were duplexes, they picked me up for escorting hordade that they were bringing back at that time. So I got sent to Brooklyn for that, and I had during that one month that I was there, I had four runs, and the rest of the time I'd check in every day and if I didn't have a run, I'd make the shows downtown in New York, beautiful. I had two runs that went through Dayton where I was living, and on the way back from the funeral, I would get on the train just as soon as I could after the funeral, I'd get off in Dayton, stay overnight, and the next morning get back on the train in time to get back into New York, get on the subway and get back to port of embarkation in time for check-in. It was pretty good timing. It worked out beautiful, but in as much as I had this moonlight business going, I didn't extend that any. Once it was up I took off and went back home. But there was one of those persons remains that had gone through the same pilot school that I went to, and he was in the next class behind me. I washed out with the 50 percent of the class that normally washed out. He made it in his class. He got killed. I carried his body home and I'm still here. There's just no justice. After I retired, I came to Austin, I retired from the military and came to Austin and got a real estate broker's license and then not only worked the broker end of it but as a developer with the Texas Veterans Land Board. I sold to well over 100 veterans, and I did not only sell for other people, but more of the properties that I bought with the bank backing and then selling, subdividing those farms and ranches for the veterans and getting all of that financed through the Veterans Land Board. I used to deliver those, hand deliver them here. That came about by one fellow that initially when I first started this with the Veterans, I had signed him up and checked on it about a month later and the contract hadn't gotten in here. So I jumped him on it. Oh, he had his money in a CD and he wanted to collect that interest before he turned it in. I said you just had a contract. It had just been terminated. From then on I hand carried every one of them in here. The day I got the signature and money, I brought it right in here.

Watch out now, we might put you to work.

Edgar Goebel: I don't know what I missed, but certainly there's something.

Well you've got a standing invitation. You can call us anytime if anything occurs to you.

[End of recording]